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Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. By decision 1997/319, the Economic and Social Council decided that the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment of its substantive session of 1998 would be devoted to the theme "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development". Consideration of the matter follows the in-depth review of gender mainstreaming by the Council in 1997 and the adoption of its agreed conclusions 1997/2.[1]

2. At the informal meeting held with delegations prior to the session, a separate report was requested. The present report responds to that request. It takes into account recent decisions of legislative bodies, and consultations undertaken with the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and United Nations system focal points on gender. Information was also reviewed from resident coordinators/representatives and Governments in response to a questionnaire sent to them in connection with the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

3. During the past two decades, the United Nations system has built the foundation both for undertaking women-specific activities and for mainstreaming gender into agency missions, sectors and, to a lesser extent, policy dialogue. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, represented a watershed in the effort to secure the full participation of women on the basis of equality in all spheres of society. Since the Beijing Conference, and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,[2] there has been increasing momentum directed towards the development of policy instruments, procedures and training to mainstream gender. Mandates for mainstreaming gender have been designed and endorsed by various intergovernmental bodies, such as the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission for Social Development and the governing bodies of several United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes. These have also been reflected in programme budgets.

4. Following the Beijing Conference, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) was established as a standing ACC subsidiary committee of ACC. Also, as noted above, agreed conclusions 1997/2, addressed to the entire United Nations system, were adopted by the Economic and Social Council. Several recommendations set out in the agreed conclusions pertained directly to gender mainstreaming at the field level. The agreed conclusions were communicated by the Secretary-General in October 1997 to all heads of departments and bodies of the United Nations system for follow-up. Responses were received from 21 heads of agencies, funds and programmes. In addition, the Secretary-General's reform proposals submitted to the General Assembly in 1997 called for gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes.

5. Since 1995, a number of United Nations organs, including the Economic and Social Council, the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, have formulated recommendations to guide the implementation of the commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action and increase system-wide coordination. These recommendations have included guidelines for country-based activities, and have increasingly reflected the emphasis placed by the United Nations reform process on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to United Nations world conferences.

6. Many of the recent directives and initiatives of United Nations entities have been targeted at increasing the efforts of staff to use gender analysis in designing, implementing and assessing plans and projects as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the mid-term review of the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/CN.6/1998/3), which is also before the Council at its present session.

7. Moreover, several aspects of the United Nations reform process have a direct impact on the ability of the United Nations system to integrate gender concerns into operational activities effectively. The Secretary-General's request to the United Nations funds and programmes to formulate and present their programmes of assistance in a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as the common framework for collaborative programming, with common objectives and time-bound targets, aims at achieving goal-oriented collaboration, programmatic coherence and mutual reinforcement among the United Nations funds and programmes at the country level, and establishing better links among individual country programmes while responding to national priorities. A comprehensive and coherent approach to development cooperation programming of the funds and programmes (and possibly the entire United Nations system), opens the way for intersectoral themes, such as gender equality, to be reflected as part of the strategic framework.

8. As suggested in the provisional guidelines on UNDAF, the United Nations country team is expected to form or use existing intersectoral theme groups, including on gender issues, at the country level for follow-up to global conferences, taking into account national priorities. UNDAF, as opposed to the country strategy note (CSN), was initially conceived for use by the funds and programmes. The Secretary-General subsequently invited specialized agencies to associate themselves with the process, and consultations with the Bretton Woods institutions are envisaged.

9. The consolidation of Secretariat departments in the economic and social fields should facilitate increasing coherence and linkage between policy, normative and operational activities, and efforts are being made toward greater harmonization of competencies between the regional commissions and global bodies. These measures provide an enhanced *modus operandi* for optimizing and coordinating development cooperation and potentially for integrating such cross-sectoral concerns as gender.

10. Despite the increasing specificity of policy guidance, checklists and guidelines, and training and evaluation requirements, the assessment of the impact of these tools and procedures on field-level activities remains to be carried out systematically. This need was recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, in March 1998, when it requested a comparative report on how different categories of projects and programmes of United Nations organizations include women's interests and gender mainstreaming issues and on resources allocated in this regard.[3]

11. Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming defined the concept of mainstreaming as a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. This definition makes explicit the need for links between gender and other sectoral and cross-sectoral issues, such as environment, poverty alleviation and human rights, as part of ongoing efforts to support the translation of global commitments into concrete activities at the country level.

12. As regards human rights, and consistent with the Beijing Platform for Action, a growing number of United Nations entities, especially operational ones, are taking a greater interest in a rights-based approach to development. In this context, several have recognized the systematic and systemic nature of discrimination against women and the need to ensure the full realization of women's human rights in the development process. The rights-based approach goes beyond the needs-based development paradigm and introduces the notion of universal rights. In the case of the rights of women and girls, it is chiefly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women along with other international treaties that form a foundation for United Nations efforts. Denial of rights, whether as outright and direct discrimination or as a result of subtle but ingrained forms of structural and systemic disadvantage and inequality, perpetuates women's poverty, stymies .their contribution to the economic and social development of societies, and deprives communities and countries of their ideas and commitment to peace and progress.

13. In that context, and in response to legislative mandates, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat is collaborating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in efforts to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective into the technical cooperation activities of that Office. Other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have also been collaborating on programmatic initiatives in this area.

14. There has been relatively little time to assess the effectiveness of the post-Beijing initiatives. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest some important future directions based on the evidence to date, including the exchange of experiences at intergovernmental, inter-agency and technical meetings, and in anticipation of the high-level review of the implementation of the Platform for Action in the year 2000. In this connection, it is important to bear in mind the comprehensive recommendations contained in Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, many of which apply directly to operational activities. At the end of each section of the present report, concrete recommendations are made for consideration by the Council, which are in addition to those contained in agreed conclusions 1997/2.

II. Capacity-building for gender mainstreaming

A. Institutional structure

15. Gender mainstreaming as a cross-sectoral issue is expected to be reflected fully in the four Executive Committees created by the Secretary-General. The United Nations Development Group has discussed the question of gender mainstreaming and has established a Subgroup on Gender and Development, which will be chaired by UNIFEM, and a work programme. The Executive Committee

on Economic and Social Affairs recently held a discussion on the gender dimension of its work. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs adopted recommendations for a principle-centred approach to guide United Nations operations in Afghanistan and welcomed the establishment of an ad hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender Issues in Afghanistan under the leadership of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. Gender issues have also been taken up in the Executive Committee on Peace and Security.

16. The ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is a key body to which the United Nations system is turning for leadership to strengthen system-wide support for the advancement and empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming. The Committee is mandated to develop tools and methodologies to facilitate practical steps in the follow-up to Beijing and other conferences, some of which are referred to in the present report.

17. The new Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of which the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women are a part, is the Secretariat entity responsible for economic and social issues. The Department is seeking to mainstream a gender perspective in its work, for example in relation to poverty eradication. The recent reorganization included the reassignment to the Division of staff from the former Department for Development Support and Management Services with responsibilities for advisory services. While existing intergovernmental mandates will continue to be implemented, this will allow for a more focused provision of gender advisory services to Governments on request. Operational activities within the United Nations system will continue to rest primarily with the agencies, funds and programmes, with the Division's advisory services providing a complement to, rather than a substitute for, such activities.

18. As the main United Nations entities for the advancement of women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and UNIFEM have been mandated by the General Assembly to strengthen cooperation and coordination within their respective mandates in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Similarly, in agreed conclusions 1997/2, the Economic and Social Council invited those entities, in their advocacy and advisory roles, to better coordinate their support and catalytic activities for gender mainstreaming and to identify and develop joint activities and workplans in appropriate areas.

19. Although their mandates are different, they are complementary. The Division for the Advancement of Women is a catalyst for advancing the global agenda on women's issues and for mainstreaming a gender perspective. INSTRAW, as a research and training institute, plays a catalytic role in stimulating further research on the advancement of women in collaboration with the Division, and conducts training seminars at the national level. UNIFEM promotes the political and economic empowerment of women by providing direct operational support at the national and regional levels. Examples of coordination among the three entities include projects on violence against women, support for training for non-governmental organizations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the joint Internet site, WomenWatch.

20. A number of other actions are under way throughout the United Nations system to enhance institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming. In the case of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for example, the process of integrating a gender perspective is still in its early stages. The Office is planning to undertake an analysis of its activities, practices and procedures from the perspectives of gender and women's human rights, benefiting from the work that has been done in other parts of the system, particularly with regard to institutional structures that can best facilitate the implementation of gender policies.

> **Recommendation: The Council may wish again to call upon the United Nations system to fully incorporate gender into the integrated follow-up to recent global conferences, and to continue to strengthen its capacity to support and implement world conference commitments related to women's human rights, women's empowerment and the elimination of violence against women.**

B. Guidelines and checklists

21. The third session of IACWGE, held in March 1998, covered a broad range of activities, including guidelines for the compilation of good practices in the implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming, and established a timetable for their collection. Work is under way to develop guidelines in other areas as well, such as on performance indicators.

22. Within the ACC machinery, CCPOQ guidelines on a number of mechanisms and modalities either exist or are being finalized, covering a variety of issues (such as the

resident coordinator system, the programme approach, CSN, monitoring and evaluation, national execution), which define the functioning of the United Nations system at the country level. Many of these guidelines explicitly support ways of mainstreaming gender issues.

23. Moreover, most United Nations organizations and bodies have developed policies, guidelines, checklists and, in some cases, handbooks for gender mainstreaming (for example, UNICEF, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)).

24. Two United Nations bodies have issued directives: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The UNDP Administrator's Direct Line No. 11 on gender equality and the advancement of women, addressed to all resident representatives, lays out the commitment of UNDP to supporting gender equality and the advancement of women. The directive issued by the Executive Director of UNFPA in November 1997 draws the attention of staff to their individual responsibility for ensuring that a gender perspective is successfully mainstreamed in all policies and programmes. These two initiatives are in line with Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, in which the Council called upon agencies to develop institutional directives rather than discretionary guidelines for gender mainstreaming.

25. The priority attached to women's advancement at the field level is signalled by national/regional action plans. These give some insight into the institutions and processes being used to maintain the momentum generated by Beijing. Information on implementation strategies can be found in the synthesized report of the Secretary-General on national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1998/6), which examines plans provided to the Secretariat by 90 Governments, five subregional entities and one observer.

Recommendation: In keeping with its agreed conclusions 1997/2, the Council may wish to further encourage agencies to pursue the development of institutional directives for gender mainstreaming and women's equality.

C. Focal points

26. There is general agreement that the catalytic role of gender and women in development focal points is essential to gender mainstreaming, but questions remain about how best to institutionalize this role, so that attention to gender becomes irreversible.

27. At present, all UNDP country offices have designated gender focal points, as have UNDP headquarters regional bureaux, the UNDP Office of Human Resources, the Bureau for Resources and External Affairs, and each of the bureaux for policy development responsible for poverty, environment and governance. All UNDP headquarters gender focal points meet on a monthly basis as a Gender Advisory Committee to UNDP.

28. At UNESCO, the Unit for the Promotion of the Status of Women and Gender Equality, created in 1996, is the overall focal point responsible both internally and externally. The Unit works foremost through a network of focal points that have been assigned in each of the prominent units (sectors). Field offices and national commissions are being encouraged to assign gender in development (GID) focal points to the extent possible, and to cooperate on GID matters with other United Nations agencies.

29. All six of the WHO regional offices have focal points on women, health and development, who also promote work in the area of gender and development. At WHO headquarters, an Interdivisional Working Group on Gender serves as a resource group within the organization. In addition, a number of technical programmes have gender focal points, with budget allocations.

30. At UNHCR, there is one Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women based in Geneva and five Senior Regional Advisers for Refugee Women, based in the regions. There are also refugee women focal points for every country programme. Outside gender consultants are used, whenever deemed necessary; for gender analysis training and for specific purposes such as evaluations.

31. At the International Labour Organization (ILO), three additional posts of Senior Specialist on Women and Gender Questions were created: one at headquarters, and two in the regions – as part of multidisciplinary teams in Manila and New Delhi.

32. The gender team at UNICEF headquarters includes three Professional staff members. Most country and regional offices have full-time gender focal points. A global gender resource network and regional gender networks have been

established and have helped to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues in country programmes.

33. Recently, UNFPA headquarters was reorganized, resulting in the establishment of a Gender Theme Group. Within the UNFPA country support team system, gender population and development advisers are appointed at the regional level to provide substantive assistance to country offices regarding the integration of gender into their programmes and projects. Gender focal points are appointed in practically all UNFPA country offices for day-to-day follow-up of gender concerns in programmes/projects.

34. As a first step in implementing its gendered habitat policy, UNCHS has created a Gender Unit, directly under the Executive Director, which will work closely with the Women and Habitat Programme of the Centre. The Coordinator of the Gender Unit is expected to be on board by June 1998. The strategic positioning of an operational women's programme and a gender unit that provides services throughout the institution provides a model for mainstreaming gender that can prove effective in practice.

35. At IFAD, one Senior Technical Adviser addresses both Gender and Household Food Security. During the biennium 1997-1998, under the direct supervision of the single Technical Adviser on Gender and Household Food Security, a number of staff working papers and other research activities were carried out. Sociologists and/or gender specialists are usually part of every design team. Gender specialists are sometimes included as full team members throughout the life of the project. The approach, however, is to ensure that implementation, supervision and monitoring activities address gender issues.

36. Several initiatives are under way designed to expand the extent of gender expertise available to the resident coordinator system. For example, over the next 18 months, UNIFEM will be placing gender advisers in 10 countries. Each gender adviser will be placed for a two-year term and will work closely with the resident coordinator and play a catalytic role in relation to the overall United Nations system at the country level. The gender adviser will focus on only one or, in some cases, two countries. Countries will be chosen on the basis of demonstrated interest and commitment of the resident coordinator and the level of activity and commitment on the part of government and civil society to the Beijing Platform for Action. Gender advisers will be fielded in phases.

37. In addition, UNIFEM, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) and UNDP will be fielding 20 gender specialists, 16 of whom have already been placed. Gender specialists will assist the resident representative and the resident coordinator with such tasks as engendering project documents and supporting both UNDP and the United Nations system in order to strengthen support for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the country level. UNIFEM, UNDP and UNV are collaborating on providing training and orientation to the gender specialists, including efforts to support team-building and collaboration with gender focal points.

38. Although efforts are being made to strengthen expertise in gender mainstreaming at the field level through such means, the gender focal point system continues to experience weaknesses. A study commissioned by the UNIFEM Regional Programme Adviser in East Africa on coordination of United Nations gender activities in the region confirmed a number of the general concerns expressed globally regarding the effectiveness and capacity of gender focal points. It found that the dedication and determination of gender focal points was severely constrained by lack of commitment and inadequate institutional support from top leadership. Moreover, there were neither clear agency policies nor adequate budgetary allocations. The involvement of gender advisers in inter-agency mechanisms was therefore guided by the use of discretionary guidelines rather than institutional directives for coordination of gender mainstreaming.

39. The high turnover rate of gender focal points, inadequate substantive knowledge of gender analysis and programming skills and unrealistic job descriptions had aggravated the situation. Most gender focal points had their "regular" duties in addition to focal point responsibilities, which involved: coordinating work on gender mainstreaming; facilitating the work of others; collecting and disseminating information; acting as catalysts; linking people to integrate gender in different areas of responsibility. A number were also volunteers or had been recruited without any training or preparation.

40. Therefore, as efforts to use this modality for gender mainstreaming continue to grow, greater attention will need to be paid both to capacity-building to strengthen the expertise available through the gender focal point system and to ensuring that the effectiveness of their role is seen as part of senior management's responsibility.

41. In addition, more systematic analysis is needed of the current situation with respect to gender focal points. As a result of the decisions taken in March 1998, IACWGE will seek resources to conduct a review of the women in development (WID)/gender focal point function in the United Nations system, with a view to making

recommendations on a core set of criteria to guide the system in relation to such focal points.

Recommendation: The Council may wish to reiterate the need for a study of the role of gender units and focal points, including a focus on the extent to which focal points have support from and access to the highest levels of decision-making.

D. Strategic frameworks and programming

42. As in the case of development assistance in other areas, a national policy environment for the advancement of women is of crucial importance in order for United Nations system support to be possible. The feedback obtained from a review of the replies received on the issue of gender included in the questionnaires sent to both Governments and resident coordinators in connection with the triennial comprehensive policy review indicated that the level of government readiness for assistance in gender programming varies considerably. From the responses, it appears that Governments are at varying stages of development regarding gender programming, ranging from those Governments that have expressed no interest in having women-specific projects, those that support sporadic women-related projects and those that have established national policies and/or national machineries to address gender, to those that have developed and/or are implementing a national action plan, either utilizing women-specific or mainstreaming approaches.

43. For those Governments involved and/or interested in gender programming, the issue is often framed in terms of capacity-building for gender mainstreaming. Current and projected United Nations system support for capacity-building in gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women includes, *inter alia*, assistance in gender policies, development of national action plans, strengthening of national machineries, national sex-disaggregated data, women's human rights, and increasing women's economic participation and employment opportunities.

44. The emphasis placed by the United Nations reform process on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to United Nations world conferences has the potential to break new ground in achieving the goal of women's equality. In this connection, it is important to note the crucial role of the resident coordinator system in mobilizing the United Nations system to introduce gender mainstreaming in a coordinated manner at the country level. The follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and gender mainstreaming must be adequately reflected in the frameworks for integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences that are in place in the United Nations system. The resident coordinator system, through strategic and programming frameworks, such as the country strategy note, the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework is the main entry point in this regard.

45. An Inter-Agency Workshop on Field-level Follow-up to Global Conferences was organized by CCPOQ, the United Nations Development Group Office (DGO) and the United Nations Staff College (UNSC) at the ILO Training Centre at Turin in December 1997, with a view to developing guidance, in particular for the resident coordinator system, on an integrated and coordinated follow-up at the field level to the recent United Nations global conferences. The Workshop was convened in the context of the comprehensive assessment carried out by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, at its second regular session of 1997, on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the global conferences, on the basis of reviews by three ACC task forces and the work of other relevant ACC subsidiary mechanisms (CCPOQ, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, IACWGE and the like).

46. The Workshop, which constituted a further step in the ongoing process of improving country-level programming coordination for the follow-up of global conferences, brought together representatives of the ACC task forces and other inter-agency mechanisms, designated lead agencies, resident coordinators and agency field representatives. This facilitated the exchange of views from different parts of the system on the conclusions and recommendations of the ACC task forces as well as on the experience gained to date on the implementation of the plans and programmes of action emanating from the global conferences.

47. Among the key recommendations emanating from the Workshop was that follow-up action on the themes emerging from global conferences should be strengthened through specific steps taken to deepen the understanding of United Nations staff, Governments and other partners on cross-cutting recommendations of the conferences. With regard to gender mainstreaming, the recommendations made related to ensuring that women's empowerment and gender equality strategies were incorporated into UNDAF, CSN and the like; supporting efforts to gather and "package" data disaggregated by sex; making full use of expertise of gender focal points, UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women and INSTRAW; supporting the convening of inter-agency thematic groups on gender; building competence and capacity in gender responsive programming for United Nations: staff and partners; consulting with and

providing financial support to non-governmental organizations and national machineries for women working on post-conference strategies; and improving and coordinating the ways in which United Nations agencies supported women's human rights and strategies to eliminate violence against women. It was also felt that the resident coordinator system should support the Government's national reporting processes to United Nations intergovernmental bodies, as appropriate. The Workshop also discussed "best practices" and their potential importance in stimulating and promoting conference follow-up.

48. At its twelfth session, in March 1998, CCPOQ endorsed the recommendations of its Working Group on the resident coordinator system to convert the guidance contained in the report of the Workshop into an ACC/CCPOQ note to be distributed to all United Nations system country teams and other agency representatives.

49. Notably, CSN, where it is applied, represents an opportunity for the United Nations system to interact with the host Government in identifying those national priorities to which the system can respond with its development support. Gender issues have been identified as a priority theme in many CSNs already adopted. The introduction of UNDAF represents an additional opportunity to emphasize, within the framework of a coordinated follow-up to global conferences, the importance of gender issues as a cross-cutting theme for United Nations support. However, as indicated above, UNDAF does not currently encompass the activities of the entire United Nations system, but is limited to those of the funds and programmes.

50. Whether or not there is a CSN and/or an UNDAF, the internalization of gender issues in the operational activities for development of the United Nations system at the country level may benefit from the establishment of a theme group on gender in development, comprising United Nations system organizations and other entities, particularly at the national level.

51. The resident coordinator system will prepare annual reports to reflect the experience and progress towards the achievement of objectives as described by the organizations of the United Nations system at the country level in their annual work plans. These plans will cover the initiatives to coordinate and promote collaborative development actions mainstreaming gender issues in the development cooperation cycle of United Nations system support for the host countries.

52. Despite their role as frameworks in the follow-up to global conferences, the guidelines for the formulation of CSN and the provisional guidelines on UNDAF, respectively, make reference to gender issues only as possible examples of priority themes, without pointing to gender concerns as major issues to be singled out. However, this also applies to other substantive issues such as sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and human development, since the guidelines were formulated focusing on the procedures related to those mechanisms and avoided referencing those cross-sectoral development issues that should deserve top priority. The task of identifying the top theme priorities is left to the United Nations country team and/or the representatives of the host Government and other national entities. Nevertheless, since the process of formulating both CSN and UNDAF derives from a consultation process at the country level for the implementation of global conferences and other international agendas, these mechanisms should necessarily stress gender issues as a key cross-sectoral topic that has been highlighted in the various platforms and agendas. The experience in the 32 countries where CSN has already been adopted confirms the relevance of gender issues as a principal priority for those CSNs. The pilot phase of UNDAF, now in the process of its completion, will show the extent to which gender issues have played a major role in defining the priorities for United Nations system collaborative programming.

53. In the preparation of UNDAF, an important step is the common country assessment, which requires collaborative action through the collection of data and information required to assess the priority orientation of the development cooperation programmes of the United Nations funds and programmes or of the system, if other components participate in UNDAF. In the pilot phase, a tentative selection of indicators was suggested in the appendix to the provisional guidelines of UNDAF, which identifies eight distinct areas: (i) population, (ii) mortality and fertility, (iii) health, (iv) education, (v) income and employment, (vi) habitat and infrastructure, (vii) environment and (viii) human security and social justice.

54. Although gender is not among the eight components, a closer examination reveals that most of the indicators have been gender disaggregated. This proposal builds on the experience with the common country assessment piloted by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) and is now incorporated in the UNDAF process.

55. UNDAF is now being piloted in 18 countries. The pilot phase is to be assessed during 1998 and UNDG will submit a report on the experience to the Secretary-General by the end of the year, with possible conclusions and recommendations about the suitability of the new framework for larger-scale application. One of the issues that will be

UNDAF Experience in Mozambique

Based on the country strategy note of 1995, of the Government of Mozambique and other assessments and directives, UNDAF/Mozambique aimed at coordination at three levels: inter-agency programming; joint resources; and coordination with donor efforts. Gender and Development was identified as one of the 11 common areas of development assistance. The Gender Theme Group participants are UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the World Bank. Gender-specific programmes total $1.842 million, representing 0.31 per cent of the total planned or estimated budget for the period 1998-2001. In addition, the intersectoral nature of gender has been fully taken into account and mainstreamed into other themes, such as education, health and governance.

examined in this assessment will be the suitability of this instrument to enhance inter-agency coordination and promote collaborative programming, since the mechanism was conceived initially as limited to the United Nations funds and programmes. One of the aspects foreseen in the pilot assessment is the suitability of UNDAF as a tool to assist in the implementation of the Beijing Conference.

56. However, ensuring that the new framework and its implementation proceed with full attention to the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women and gender mainstreaming is a collective responsibility of the United Nations system, including IACWGE. This is especially important as the system moves to undertake the review and appraisal of progress towards gender mainstreaming and the identification of further actions and initiatives required to ensure its implementation. At the same time, given that UNDAF is still in a pilot stage, due attention should be paid to ensuring that a gender equality perspective is fully reflected in other planning frameworks for cooperation currently being implemented.

57. As gender mainstreaming is integrated cross-sectorally, systems for tracking resources devoted to gender must be put in place to enable review and assessment of these activities. The early experience with UNDAF in Mozambique, a pilot in 1997 that has yielded encouraging results, suggests the potential of this framework for integrating gender into a coordinated approach to United Nations system efforts at the field level.

58. The recent study of coordination of United Nations gender activities in the Eastern African region (see para. 38 above), found that field staff agreed that the most effective way of enhancing coordination of United Nations gender activities in that region was through the UNDAF process. They recommended that gender advisers and focal points work together to ensure that the identification of issues and priorities in the common country assessment included a strong gender analysis of priority areas. They also found that coordination was hampered by a lack of information flow between gender units and divisions at headquarters and the field. Most of the United Nations agencies in the region were not aware of the series of recommendations to guide implementation of the commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action and increase system-wide coordination. They continued to develop gender action plans and indicators for women's empowerment and gender equality strictly along individual mandates. There was no conscious effort to determine, at the level of conceptualization and formulation, where the gaps were, which agency was capable of filling the gaps, and tentative proposals for possible action.

59. On the other hand, the study also found that in Ethiopia the Inter-Agency Women's Group on Gender and Development had assembled training materials and manuals from agencies represented, with a view to helping United Nations agencies sensitize their staff members on gender issues through the development of joint advisory and training activities. Notably, the members of the group had not only developed their terms of reference together, but had also agreed to develop a common gender policy statement and strategy at the country level to mainstream gender and respond in a unified manner.

60. Inter-agency thematic or working groups on gender exist in Brazil, Mexico, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Thailand and India. These groups involve gender focal points from all of the other United Nations agencies operating in the country in meetings, information sharing and joint activities to promote gender equality. While the activities and structure of these groupings vary from country to country – for example, in Senegal, the group includes United Nations agencies as well as bilateral, government and non-governmental organization participants, whereas in Mexico it is limited to United Nations agencies – they provide a powerful focus for coordination.

61. One of the challenges facing gender advisers in their coordination efforts is whether or not to define an inter-agency mainstreaming policy, and if so, what issues such a policy should address. There is need for caution in setting up rules and regulations for coordination so as to ensure that agency differences in orientation and approach are not stifled. Instead, any such policy would have to adopt a learning process approach and be formulated in broad terms that allowed for flexibility and adaptation. At the very least, it should spell out procedures for stakeholder involvement and establish a mechanism for achieving this involvement.

62. The Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan resulted in the development of a coherent set of guidelines for field staff for implementing a principle-centred approach to humanitarian and development assistance with indicators for measuring progress on a wide range of gender issues. Based on the work of the Mission, ACC subsequently stressed that gender issues needed to be fully integrated into the "strategic framework" process for countries in crisis.

63. An example of the United Nations system collaborating together at the regional level to increase impact and fulfil commitments to gender equality goals is the Latin American and Caribbean Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women, designed to coincide with activities that celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the five-year review of the World Conference on Human Rights. The campaign, entitled "A Life Free of Violence: It's Our Right",was convened by UNIFEM in 1997 and is being coordinated by the UNIFEM office in Ecuador. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome are all participating in the planning, launching and implementation of numerous activities, and different agencies are taking the lead for different aspects of the work. Currently, 19 Latin American and Caribbean Governments have formally endorsed the campaign.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council may wish to suggest the review of several critical factors during the ongoing review of the UNDAF framework, such as the need to ensure that long-term commitments are built into the design of programmes; that meetings among agency heads to plan and coordinate activities are followed up with meetings at the working level to ensure efficiency; that methodologies are established for effective tracking of resources; and that care is taken to ensure integration of technical contributions from agencies not represented in the field.

(ii) The Council may wish to emphasize that United Nations organizations should undertake gender analysis in preparing CSNs and CCAs and in formulating UNDAFs, including those for countries in crisis, to ensure that strategies for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are incorporated.

(iii) The Council may wish to emphasize the importance of combining sex-disaggregated data and research available through the CCA and the CSN processes to ensure that programmes are formulated with a clear understanding of the differential impacts and opportunities that they will have for men and women;

(iv) The Council may consider recommending that support be given on a priority basis to the collection by Governments of information disaggregated by sex on the 15 indicators in the Minimum National Social Data set agreed by the Statistical Commission in view of the importance of data for gender mainstreaming.

(v) The Council may wish to endorse the proposal to convene field-level inter-agency thematic groups on gender, while at the same time making it clear that all inter-agency thematic or working groups should incorporate gender analysis into their work.

(vi) The Council may wish to reiterate the importance of promoting and supporting ratification, compliance with and reporting on, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through the resident coordinator in view of the importance of the Convention as a framework for gender equality.

E. Accountability and evaluation

64. Overall, a new management culture is being promoted in organizations of the United Nations system that puts greater responsibility and accountability on staff at various levels. This presents many opportunities to strengthen attention to gender issues. Notably, in April 1998 the heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that constitute ACC adopted a mission or advocacy statement for the United Nations system as a whole on gender equality and mainstreaming. In addition, following the Beijing

Conference, most United Nations entities have a policy on gender mainstreaming.

65. There is, however, need for greater accountability at all levels to ensure effective gender mainstreaming. This was highlighted in the draft resolution on the mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women for adoption by the Economic and Social Council,[4] by which the Council would urge the Secretary-General to ensure that obstacles encountered in the implementation of the plan were dealt with effectively, in particular through heightened accountability at all levels, particularly that of senior managers.

66. Monitoring mechanisms and information are important for accountability and evaluation. At the field level, the inter-agency project promoted by UNIFEM (in collaboration with UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the Pan American Health Organization in Mexico is supporting relevant governmental sectors in developing a statistical system that can be used to improve gender analysis and evaluation in relation to poverty alleviation programmes. In India, UNIFEM is convening an inter-agency group to make data gender sensitive so as to reflect women's roles and status better. The group is supporting activities to ensure a more gender-sensitive national census process in 2001.

67. At UNHCR, periodic evaluations of programmes take place to ascertain whether gender is being addressed adequately and its impact on all policies and programmes. To strengthen organizational responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming, the career management system has incorporated gender and empowerment of women as an indicator in the core competency. Accountability for the implementation of the policies and guidelines for refugee women is being incorporated in the managerial and functional competencies of the career management system. Gender analysis is not a routine element of all evaluation, programming and budgetary procedures, nor has a system for tracking performance been put in place. However, sex-disaggregated data is collected and used in the planning process and progress is reported in annual and periodic reports.

68. At UNICEF, evaluations of gender mainstreaming are included in the mid-term review of the country programme and provide an assessment of progress with respect to the goals of the country programme and UNICEF. Regional focal points periodically assess regional progress by organizing specific meetings, visits to country offices and consultations. A global synthesis and analysis of programme experience is prepared annually and included in the annual report of the Executive Director to the Executive Board. UNICEF follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, including implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, is incorporated in the annual report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council. Nevertheless, mainstreaming gender does not receive attention at senior management levels for policy implementation in a consistent manner. Very few offices have instituted mechanisms for responsibility, accountability and coordination for mainstreaming gender issues. Moreover, perceptions that gender issues are synonymous with women's issues results in poor understanding of the issues and their implications for programming. This has been a major drawback in changing attitudes and eliciting commitment from staff across all levels.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council may wish to recommend that by the year 2000, one third of resident coordinators should be able to report concretely on the setting up of gender theme groups and on the use of resources for gender mainstreaming activities, and that by the year 2002, at least two thirds of resident coordinators should be able to do so.

(ii) The Council may wish to suggest that the Secretary-General's report for the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the year 2000, on progress in gender mainstreaming in operational activities, should be prepared with inputs from the United Nations Development Group and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 2000 to facilitate further review of progress in mainstreaming gender in operational activities.

F. Staff training and development of training materials

69. Most agencies have staff training programmes in place to support gender mainstreaming. For example, at UNDP a high priority is placed on strengthening the capacities of gender focal points, through a series of one-week learning, consultation and briefing workshops over a three-year period at the regional/subregional levels and in selected country offices on a pilot basis. The workshops are organized and facilitated by the Gender-in-Development Programme (GIDP). The workshops focus on meeting the needs of

gender focal points in their work at the country level. In addition, the Gender-in-Development Programme has prepared an information package for all gender focal points, including guidance on gender mainstreaming and specific thematic issues for gender mainstreaming.

70. At UNHCR, in seeking to mainstream women, a gender analysis training framework, "People Oriented Planning" (POP) was designed. UNIDO developed a set of gender training modules as well as a trainers' manual for staff training at headquarters.

71. At UNFPA, training on gender population and development has been undertaken at various intervals at headquarters. Currently, UNFPA is finalizing a three-year project that has been developing tailor-made gender, population and development training materials for all the different cadres of the organization in an effort to institutionalize training in this area among its staff.

72. At UNICEF, major efforts have been made at headquarters and field offices in the training of trainers, gender focal points, UNICEF Professional staff and counterparts. To date, three reviews of the capacity building programmes have been undertaken to make mid-course corrections and respond to emerging needs. Adoption of the rights-based approach has created a demand for in-house capacity building. Orientation on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for UNICEF staff was arranged for gender focal points during May 1997. Following upon the regional Men and Women as Leaders Workshops organized for senior women Professional staff during the biennium 1996-1997, in 1997, a Men's Leaders Workshop was held for senior male Professional staff in Asia, which was also found to be useful in understanding gender dynamics in the work situation.

73. At UNESCO, field offices are encouraged to cooperate on GID matters with other United Nations agencies in their country of operation in learning how to apply gender mainstreaming, as its own gender training efforts cannot as yet reach all of its offices. This form of cooperation among United Nations agencies at the country level is worthy of note and should be strengthened.

74. In addition to training geared to staff, many United Nations organizations and bodies, including UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, INSTRAW, UNESCO and UNIDO, are engaged in conducting training seminars at the national and regional levels focused on gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women. Some of the areas in which training has been carried out are statistics and indicators on women; women, water supply and sanitation; women, environmental management and sustainable development; refugee law and rights awareness and skills; peaceful means of conflict resolution; gender, population and development; development of women entrepreneurs in various subsectors; women in manufacturing and industry; and gender-sensitization of teachers and administrators. Training is provided to national civil servants, non-governmental organizations, academics and community workers. During the biennium 1996-1997, the shift to capacity-building for gender at decentralized levels was noted by UNICEF, with positive results. Frontline workers and volunteers in area-based projects were reached.

75. A number of constraints and challenges have been identified with regard to both staff and country-based training, including the following: not all country office staff have been trained on gender mainstreaming; training manuals need to be adapted to local contexts, very few organizations have evaluated the impact of training and most countries have had difficulty in translating training into concrete follow-up actions. Among the reasons for the difficulties are the lack of support from senior colleagues, the level and competence of gender focal points in the office, the lack of commitment to gender mainstreaming among counterparts and the non-availability of appropriate tools.

76. The development of separate gender training materials and modules by each United Nations agency for gender sensitization and skills' development poses the risk of duplication of effort. In that connection, attention is drawn to the possibility of developing a framework for gender training programmes based on a clear vision of what United Nations agencies hope to achieve as a result of training. For example, joint training activities could be designed to take into account such matters as cultivating the commitment of leadership to enhance accountability; imparting skills for gender mainstreaming in day-to-day operations; defining specific indicators for effective impact assessment; and developing a strategy for gathering gender-disaggregated data.

77. Finally, it should be noted that training alone is not sufficient to achieve the necessary and desired changes in attitudes and behaviour appropriate to gender mainstreaming: it needs to be complemented with adequate technical support in programme preparation and implementation.

Recommendations:

(i) Council may consider recommending that training should be provided to resident coordinators to enhance their capacity to

operationalize their responsibilities in the context of the Beijing commitments at the country level.

(ii) The Council may wish to stress that the United Nations country team, under the leadership of the resident coordinator, should be knowledgeable about the commitments that the United Nations system has made to gender equality and women's empowerment and, if necessary, receive training in gender impact analysis, as well as in formulating, implementing and evaluating programmes that incorporate gender and support women's empowerment.

(iii) The Council may wish to call for research to be carried out on how gender analysis is being applied at the country level and for training to be provided in its use as a tool for gender mainstreaming.

III. Resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming

78. UNDP decided in 1997 that each of the UNDP Global Programmes (Poverty, Environment, Governance) would need to allocate at least 20 per cent of its resources to gender mainstreaming, in addition to a core Global Gender Programme allocation of 10 per cent bringing total UNDP global resources allocations to at least 28 per cent. Each of the five regional programmes is committed to allocating at least 20 per cent of its UNDP regional allocations to gender mainstreaming. Through Direct Line No. 11, a communication from the Administrator of UNDP to all country offices, UNDP resident representatives have been encouraged to consult with Governments, with a view to allocating 20 per cent of UNDP core resources to gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women. GIDP is working with all units to develop indicators and tracking mechanisms. Initial responses from country offices indicate that priority programme areas include poverty eradication, gender mainstreamed programmes, legal and policy frameworks, economic empowerment, governance issues, peace-building, violence against women campaigns, and health and education for women and girls. While the decision to earmark funds for gender mainstreaming is an important step, there is as yet no systematic evidence of its impact, particularly on whether these funds will reach local communities and non-governmental organizations working on activities for the advancement of women.

79. Funds for gender mainstreaming are available in country programme budgets at UNICEF from general resources. Country offices have raised funds from supplementary resources for specific initiatives for girls and women – for example, girls' education, female genital mutilation, support for activities of non-governmental organizations, maternal mortality reduction, sexual exploitation and women's literacy programmes. The new programme and financial monitoring system will allow for closer and sharper monitoring of funds for gender mainstreaming and programmes for women and girls systematically, at all levels of the organization.

80. Although agencies with specific mandates for gender mainstreaming tend to have small budgets, some larger United Nations entities have begun the process of internal reallocation of funds towards gender mainstreaming. In general, there is evidence of some positive changes taking place in the allocation of financial resources for gender mainstreaming. As much as this could be a valuable indicator of the level of priority being attached to the issue, there is insufficient evidence at this stage to discern the extent to which priorities are actually shifting towards gender concerns.

81. At UNESCO, further to the request of the member States to improve the organization's planning process, and in line with their decision regarding women and girls as a top priority, the preparation of the most recent work plans and budget allocations for the biennium 1998-1999 took into account a new methodology that requires a clear indication of financial resources (expressed as a percentage) attributed to actions that target women and/or girls. Thus, earmarked activities will henceforth be monitored systematically by the Unit for the Promotion of Women and Gender Equality in cooperation with the administrative offices of each substantive sector. Despite the above-mentioned improvements, the substantive sectors have a tendency to elaborate "women specific" projects rather than to integrate the gender perspective in the major part of their work, as gender mainstreaming requires. This is mostly due to the as yet weak understanding of what gender means, and how it can be operationalized in each specific project.

82. At IFAD, systems for gender-sensitive budgeting are expected to be put in place with the development and use of an operational-type manual. The "Manual for household food security and gender issues in project design" will become obligatory for use in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects. Research is under way to identify the best and most cost-effective approaches to data collection and analysis for the identification of household food security and gender issues in project design.

83. A number of other agencies do not yet have a system for gender-sensitive budgeting.

84. IACWGE has a task force on budget codes/markers and financial monitoring systems for gender mainstreaming. The task force is gathering information on the methodologies of various agencies for tracking resources allocated to women and development activities and those with a gender perspective, with a view to advocating that financial systems should be developed in such a way as to enable effective tracking of such activities and of the resources allocated to them. IACGWE is also interested in efforts being undertaken at the national level to "genderize" budgets.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council may wish to recommend that United Nations entities follow up earmarking of funds for gender mainstreaming by assessing the use of the funds so allocated, including whether they are being used to support gender mainstreaming activities carried out by local women's organizations.

(ii) The Council may wish to encourage financial support to be provided to national machineries and non-governmental organizations that are developing gender-sensitive budgets.

(iii) The Council may wish to recommend that financial management systems have the capability of monitoring the nature and extent of gender mainstreaming and women's development as a cross-cutting theme and that programme staff are consulted in the development of new budget and classification schemes.

Notes

[1] A/52/3, chap. IV, para. 4.

[2] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[3] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. A (Draft resolution to be recommended by the Council at its organizational session for 1998 for adoption by the General Assembly). See Council resolution 1998/2.

[4] Ibid., *Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution III.